

How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks

60-Minute Module Series

SUPERVISION

Training Guide

HANDOUTS

**National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



Guide to Handouts

- H-1:** Key Concepts of Supervision
- H-2:** Supervising Volunteers – Roles and Responsibilities
- H-3:** Skills of a Good Supervisor
- H-4:** Personal Qualities of Good Supervisor
- H-5:** Unique Aspects of Volunteer Supervision

Key Concepts of Supervision

The purpose of supervision is to provide oversight, guidance, and support for volunteers, to enable them to do their jobs more effectively.

Concept 1

Supervisors of volunteers must clearly understand the park's expectations of them as supervisors.

Supervision involves the process of stimulating and overseeing the work of others. It is critical that supervisors of volunteers understand their role in preparing volunteers to do their jobs, in providing ongoing support and resources, in preparing reports, and in evaluating the work done by volunteers.

Concept 2

People who are competent supervisors of paid staff or volunteers share key skills and personal characteristics.

Supervision skills include delegating, planning, coaching, listening, evaluating, problem solving, recognizing, team building, and communicating. Personal characteristics include being trustworthy, fair, positive in attitude, empowering, and supportive.

Concept 3

Although principles of supervision for volunteers and paid staff are very similar, there are some unique aspects of supervising volunteers.

For example, volunteers usually work part-time. If they don't like their supervisor, they can leave. The socialization needs of volunteers may be greater. It may be harder to confront volunteers about problem situations. Volunteer's priorities may be different, requiring more flexibility.

Concept 4

Supervision systems and methods can vary depending on the formality, size, and style of the park, type of job, etc.

Supervisors who work with volunteers should take advantage of opportunities to be flexible and accommodating in order to attract and hold good volunteers.

Supervising Volunteers

Roles and Responsibilities

Preparation / Orientation of Volunteer to Job:

- Provide written job description
- Introduce volunteer to paid staff and other volunteers
- Prepare work area
- Explain supervision and evaluation system
- Explain safety management issues
- Share relevant policies and procedures

Ongoing Support and Resources:

- Training
- Coaching
- Showing appreciation
- Providing materials/Information

Reporting Requirements:

- Individuals and overall volunteer hours
- Outcomes of volunteer work
- Reports to supervisor/VIP Program Manager
- Other

Evaluation:

- Periodic performance review of a volunteer in your program
- Written evaluation of volunteer's work
- Other

Skills of a Good Supervisor

- Delegating
- Planning
- Coaching
- Listening
- Conflict Resolution
- Recognition
- Training/teaching
- Team Building
- Communications
- Problem Solving
- Evaluating / Reviewing
- Climate Setting
- Sharing Knowledge
- Setting Standards
- Other

Personal Qualities of a Good Supervisor

- Trustworthy
- Consistent
- Models Good Behavior
- Positive Attitude
- Empowering
- Supportive
- Others:

Unique Aspects of Volunteer Supervision

The principles and techniques of good supervision apply to working with volunteers and with paid staff in a very similar fashion. There are, however, some special aspects of volunteer supervision which must be noted.

1. Before volunteers begin to work in your park, they should have the supervision and evaluation system explained to them so that it is not a surprise element dropped on them without notice. Paid employees generally assume that there will be supervision and evaluation of their work. Sometimes volunteers do not, and they need to have this explained to them up front. They will generally take this as a sign that the agency is serious about its volunteer program.
2. Another issue is to get initial clarity on who will be the volunteer's supervisor. It is always advisable that the staff person working closely with the volunteer provide the supervision. It is essential to make certain that all parties are apprised as to who is the responsible party for the day-to-day supervision and management of the volunteer.
3. Those who manage and supervise volunteers must be very flexible and accommodating to respond to the special nature of the volunteer. This may often involve handling situations that do not occur with paid staff, such as those that arise because the volunteer position may have a lower priority than other things that are going on in the volunteer's life.
4. Volunteers do take the time of the staff who supervise them. This must be understood and planned for in the park, or staff may become rightfully resistant to volunteers. Volunteers frequently do volunteer work to meet some of their social needs and may, therefore, take additional time from their supervisor to meet this need.
5. Learning a process of productive interaction will be invaluable in dealing with more problematic supervisory situations. Often managers and supervisors find it more difficult to apply conflict management principles to dealing with volunteer staff.